

## Meeting with NVO Support Staff

Re:

SHD Internal Assessment and Strategic

Planning Process:

November 30, 2012, 1:30PM

### I. Pre-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Counties are not following guidelines for timely submitting their SOPs/postponements.

How to fix: Best Practice: County must send the SHD its SOP two days in advance of the hearing date. Instead, the counties are waiting until the day of the hearing to send them to SHD which creates more stress than necessary. Furthermore, some counties only send them after SHD calls them. The same is true for postponements. Guidelines for fielding and making determinations on requests for postponements and reopening are needed and should be published.

2. Issue: County Pre-hearing contacts.

Staff indicates that the counties are not making prehearing contacts and that they wait until they get the scheduling notice or just before the hearing date to prepare their SOPs.

Response: The Draft All County Information Notice re: County Appeal Representatives Responsibilities will address this issue.

3. Issue: Authorized Representatives are complaining that they are not being contacted for changes in queue calendars.

How to fix:

- a) The present IT system (HWDC) allows for only one field for contact numbers.
- b) Put the ARs contact number in the Notes section.
- c) Have the counties put the AR number on the top of their SOPs.

### II. Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: The Queue needs more backup help.

How to fix: Cross train all staff on how to run the queue. A staff person has prepared a what-to-do handout for staff to use. There should be two staff assigned to the queue for LA/Fresno video hearings.

4. Issue: When the claimant does not show for the hearing, the SHD must store the hard copy of the SOP because the hearing could be reopened.

How to fix: Storage of hard copies of SOP is a real problem. There should be an electronic system developed where the county can transmit its SOPs to the SHD and SHD would download only those SOPs necessary for claimant appearance hearings. The remaining SOPs would remain in the system (server) for retrieval later on as necessary.

5. Issue: Why can't the ALJ access the SOP electronically for purposes of the hearing? This would avoid the necessity of the ALJ having a hard copy for the hearing and a hard copy could be downloaded later for purposes of the case file and administrative record.

### III. Post-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Training: When a claimant calls about the status of their State hearing decision, if the case involves LA County, and the ALJ is Sacramento based, the call is forwarded to the LA Regional Office. However, the LA Office does not have access to the Sacramento server so the call has to be forwarded back to Sacramento. This is frustrating for the claimant.

How to fix:

- a) The staff person fielding the call should open the second screen in HWDC to determine the ALJ number. In that way, LA County cases involving Sacramento based ALJs will not result in transfer calls. This is a training issue.

### IV. Other Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Staff indicated they had difficulty knowing who to report to and who to call for assistance when problems occur.

How to fix: The SHD should publish an up-to-date Organization Chart showing the various organizations within SHD with references to the individuals who have responsibility for specific duties.

2. Issue: Workload is overwhelming at times.

How to fix: Bring down the workload by adjusting the ratio of support staff to professionals/ALJ staff.

3. Issue: Training:

- a) The Support Staff Manual needs to be updated.
- b) The NVO support staff should have one trainer designated to provide training to staff so there is consistency of content and direction.
- c) The SSM I should be involved in ALJ training to provide them with an overview of what the support staff does to assist the ALJs.

4. Issue: Should there be a Southern Call Center to handle some/most aspects of cases involving the Southern region now centralized in Sacramento?

Response: Staff reaction was favorable recognizing there could be position impacts in the NVO.

5. Issue: Pre-hearing Website Development: In terms of effectiveness and efficiency, the staff was advised that SHD is interested in developing its website to include the ability of a claimant/AR to file a hearing request, get access to hearing related information including the county SOP and to request changes electronically as the case progresses to hearing. This will result in greater access to information and avoid scheduling conflicts unnecessarily.
6. Issue: Equipment.
  - a) Everyone should have the capacity to get case file labels. Manager will work on increasing access for all staff.
  - b) Bar Codes with readers would enable staff to access up-to-date information as to where a case record is (who has it) at any one time. The present SHD tracking system does not work well. There are disconnects for example as to where a case record is when the decision has to be alternated. One fix might be putting the information in a mailbox.
7. Issue: ALJs should be cautioned about telling the parties about the expected date the decision will be issued. Invariably the claimant will call at the expected date and the decision is not ready for adoption. This places the staff in a position of having to explain the decision will be adopted as soon as possible. Therefore, the staff, like and kind, encouraged that the ALJs simply state that they will get the decision out as soon as possible.
8. Issue: ALJs should be made aware that counties and advocated carefully monitor the timeliness of decisions and call the NVO about the status of decisions when the adopt date is near.
9. Issue: Recognition:
  - a) If management wants to recognize staff for good works, it could do so at an annual party.
  - b) Guidelines for recognition must be published so staff knows the rules and what they need to do to compete.
  - c) Standards must be set for like jobs/functions/classifications.
  - d) Management can prepare a letter of recognition to the employee with a copy to the employee's personnel file.
10. Inter-personal relationship.
  - a) Training issue for ALJs: Staff feels, in some cases, they are not accorded the courtesy they would otherwise expect from certain ALJs. Some ALJs are very demanding and may have been used to personal secretaries in past employment. But with support staff having to do the work for up to 8 ALJs, the ALJs must try to assist, recognizing there is a need for teamwork, and divert work from the support staff when possible. For example, the ALJs

could prepare letters of communication to the parties, such as continuances, records open, etc.

- b) Staff would like a list of items support staff will do in priority order to support their ALJs.
- c) Staff would like a list of items ALJs are expected to do.